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IMPROVEMENT OF ENGLISH TEACHERS IN SERVICE

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Most of us who are in the English teaching service entered upon our work before any elaborate system of vocational or educational guidance was formulated. If, therefore, we have become specialists at all, we have for the most part carried on our special professional training in the years of active employment that have succeeded our normal-school or college days. Because in the midst of our routine we had grown conscious of the need of advice and guidance and stimulation, we have in these recent years sought diligently for the means that would make us more intelligent and more efficient teachers of English. We have as a result of this search discovered that many leaders among the higher institutions had anticipated our demands and had made provision for the type of instruction of which we in our lack of experience had felt a most urgent need.

Perhaps the type of service that has been most generally helpful has been the work offered by the colleges in their summer terms. For many years the college authorities in planning such courses naturally laid the emphasis upon content courses. They tacitly accepted the general thesis that he who knows a subject knows how to teach it. A natural corollary to this as applied to a given subject was, for example, that he is the best teacher of Latin whose mastery of the language is most complete.

The modern point of view continues to lay an equally strong emphasis upon the mastery of subject-matter. There is no English teacher with a lofty and intelligent conception of his task who fails to work daily and consistently to increase his knowledge of literature and language. He wishes to come into the most intimate acquaintanceship with the greatest thoughts and the highest ideas of worlds ancient and worlds modern. He wishes at the same time to acquire an increasing skill to express ade-

quately his own deeper conceptions and subtler emotions. In these later years of war and chaos he has, by the very impetus of an internecine environment, been induced to study problems which this new citizenry in the world has imposed.

Many teachers, thinking of the new social and patriotic demands which altered conditions have created, have been keenly impressed with the need for expert guidance in this new field. They have felt that their private reading and study have but brought to them the realization of their own lack of historic and sociological knowledge. They have accordingly enrolled in such summer-school or extension courses as would guide them in their work—not merely the work of having their pupils meet the classroom demands of an English period, but rather of having these pupils within an English period receive the sort of instruction that would prepare this younger generation for citizenship in the federated world. Such instruction will be at once a preparation of the mind and a preparation of the spirit—such a spiritual preparation as will enable our young people to interpret sympathetically such a passage as the wounded Captain Lord Dunsany addressed to an America as yet neutral in the preface to *The Last Book of Wonder* in 1916.

I do not know where I may be when this preface is read. . . . To some of you in America this may seem an unnecessary and wasteful quarrel, as other people's quarrels often are; but it comes to this, that though we are all killed, there will be songs again, but if we were to submit and so survive, there could be neither songs nor dreams, nor any joyous, free things any more. And do not regret the lives that are wasted among us, or the work that the dead would have done, for war is no accident that man's care could have averted, but is as natural, though not as regular, as the tides; as well regret the things that the tide has washed away, which destroys and cleanses and crumbles, and spares the minutest shells. . . .

The desire for this mental and spiritual growth the English teachers in their devoted service will always strive to cultivate. But the best of the group have come to realize that they can impart their message with greater skill if they can learn some of the ways in which they can master a higher technique in their teaching. And it is in this field that the professional courses in English teaching have proved their undoubted worth.

It is passing strange that it took the world of education so long to recognize the need of this professional training for those who

teach in the secondary schools. In the primary and elementary grades the need was very early felt and met. The corresponding demand in the secondary group is as yet but meagerly supplied.

In centers where a particular college or university is in sympathetic understanding with the neighboring school systems, much can be accomplished in teacher training during the school year. Columbia, Harvard, Chicago, the University of Pennsylvania, and indeed practically all of the larger colleges and the state universities have established both content and professional-training courses where those who are experienced in a given field offer general principles and detailed suggestions that can be carried over by the teachers into practical classroom work.

In the teacher-training work at Cleveland—and I am using Cleveland as an illustration because I wish to be concrete and because I can speak of work in which I am now very personally interested—a somewhat different system has been evolved through the co-operative work of Western Reserve University and the Cleveland Board of Education. Together they have founded the Cleveland School of Education. Financed and directly administered by the school board, the work is at the same time greatly enriched by the services and resources of the college.

While many of the courses offered, both during regular term time (September to June) and during the six weeks' summer session, are academic courses, a large portion of the work is organized to meet the direct professional needs of the classroom; and no pains are spared to bring to the separate groups the sort of help that will improve the immediate teaching technique in all the various grades of service. The following titles of courses which were offered last summer will illustrate the professional character of the work in English: (1) the teaching of English in the first three primary grades; (2) the teaching of English in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades; (3) the teaching of English in the junior high school; (4) the teaching of English in the senior high school; (5) teaching English to foreigners.

Perhaps the most important phase of this training as developed in the practice is the work in the observation schools. Most of those members of the faculty who conduct courses, particularly

in the summer school, do actual classroom teaching with pupils who are doing regular school work in the separate grades. The theoretical comment of one hour accordingly finds its interpretation in a succeeding hour. In other words, the normal-school method for the training of elementary teachers is readjusted and applied to the training of the secondary group, as well as the primary and intermediate groups.

Cleveland has this year gone one step farther in this type of professional work. The departments of English, foreign languages, mathematics, geography, history, and hygiene have each been placed in charge of a special director. A large part of the service of the director will be to try to broaden the vision and improve the technical skill of each teacher in these separate departments.

Before this scheme can be successfully administered, it is of primary importance that the most cordial relationship be established between the supervisor and the teaching staff. This invites a re-examination and a restatement of such a relationship.

Tennyson's *In Memoriam* fortunately supplies us with a phrase which, in definiteness of expression and in breadth of connotation, admirably serves as a basis for any discussion which assumes even a partial understanding of the mutual relationship of teacher and supervisor. The poet, after he has faced the realization of the baffling failures and the disappointing experiences that successively confront the man who is out on his search for truth, comes finally to the fortunate point where he is able to say,

I see in part
That all, as in some piece of art,
Is toil co-operant to an end.

Toil co-operant to an end. This expression well emphasizes the two general points inherent in the relationship of teacher and supervisor. In the effort to attain the provisioned goal there must be toil and there must be co-operation.

Whoever embarks on a teaching career with the idea that the work is easy and free from all those elements of toil that are apparent in other kinds of work has indeed failed to read into *teaching* what in fact the word rightfully connotes. But the element in this work that most annoys and fatigues can in many cases

be greatly reduced if teachers and supervisors are able to keep before them the significant ends to be attained. The supervisor whose equipment and personality are of adequate measure will endeavor to give to his teachers a clear conception of both the general design and the successive goals to be won. The general design is the higher mental and spiritual development of the child and his potential contribution to the welfare of the community and the nation. Clearly to perceive this, skilfully to impart its essence to his teachers and thus increase their power and influence over their pupils—all this is the function and the privilege of those who are placed in positions of supervisory capacity.

Along with this power to prevision the whole design there must go the power to know some of the best ways of winning each successive goal. Experience should be of value in teaching teachers "what weapons to select, what armor to endure," in order that the teachers may approach their task "fearless and unperplexed."

Yet we must all admit that this sense of sureness can never be fully realized in our reactions upon human products. Manufacturers of a certain product may reduce their working plans to a system that practically eliminates waste and failure. Each individual entity is 99.44 per cent pure. We who are engaged in educational work cannot attain this high percentage in dealing with temperamental pupils, but teachers and supervisors in conference and co-operation can do much to overcome losses.

This conception of supervision exactly coincides with our present notion for democracy. There should be generated in any co-operative group, political, social, commercial, or educational, a burdening feeling of personal responsibility. Where the burden is self-imposed the sense of weight is rarely felt to be oppressive. Committees working among themselves will, under wise direction, create a spirit more helpful and produce a result more valuable than can possibly be secured by the wisest autocracy.

"But," the high educational modernist here interrupts, "we must have this imposed authority so that the results in each school system may be subjected to scientific measurement." However, the thing to be measured must be of measurable consistency, and a

great part of English, being of a highly spiritualized context, does not admit of a purely objective judgment. And as we cannot definitely know the value of the teaching product, so, too, are we often in doubt concerning the true worth of the teacher himself. The supervisor of a system may profitably take cognizance of the objective devices that aid him in his valuation of a teacher's services. Certain patent faults in the teaching may be frankly pointed out and constructive criticism be freely offered. The supervisor may create within his teaching corps a general desire for improvement in efficiency by submitting to each teacher a copy of the Boyce list of desirable themes to consider in estimating the value of a teacher's services.

THE BOYCE EFFICIENCY RECORD

A. Personal equipment

1. General appearance
2. Health
3. Voice
4. Intellectual capacity
5. Initiative and self-reliance
6. Adaptability
7. Accuracy
8. Industry
9. Enthusiasm and optimism
10. Integrity and sincerity
11. Self-control
12. Promptness
13. Tact
14. Sense of justice

B. Social and professional equipment

15. Academic preparation
16. Professional preparation
17. Grasp of subject-matter
18. Understanding of children
19. Interest in the life of the school
20. Interest in the life of the community
21. Ability to meet and interest patrons
22. Interest in lives of pupils
23. Co-operation and loyalty
24. Professional interest and growth
25. Daily preparation
26. Use of English

- C. School management
 - 27. Care of light, heat, and ventilation
 - 28. Neatness of room
 - 29. Care of routine
 - 30. Discipline (governing skill)
- D. Technique of teaching
 - 31. Definiteness and clearness of aim
 - 32. Skill in habit formation
 - 33. Skill in stimulating thought
 - 34. Skill in teaching how to study
 - 35. Skill in questioning
 - 36. Choice of subject-matter
 - 37. Organization of subject-matter
 - 38. Skill and care in assignment
 - 39. Skill in motivating work
 - 40. Attention to individual needs
- E. Results
 - 41. Attention and response of the class
 - 42. Growth of pupils in subject-matter
 - 43. General development of pupils
 - 44. Stimulation of community
 - 45. Moral influence

A committee of English teachers from the high schools of Cleveland has recently approached this whole question from a different angle—the angle of self-measurement. They have worked upon the theory that while the stimulation and constructive criticism of a principal, a superintendent, a supervisor, or a head of a department may be of great inspirational and directive value, no perceptible improvement can be actually made until the teacher by his own self-analysis becomes conscious of his own merits and defects. He may then decide to seek suggestions for his emphasis and improvement and then firmly resolve to place his efficiency upon a higher plane. Such decision will be vital because it will be self-imposed. It will be fraught with higher potentiality because the teacher will feel himself to be one of a group communistically active in self-improvement. The specific questions which follow are suggested as an appropriate guide to this self-scrutiny—a self-scrutiny that ought to result in a decided improvement of each one's teaching worth. In the privacy of our inner sanctuaries

we answer as truthfully as we can our questionnaire. We say to our pedagogical selves:

Stand still, my soul, in the silent dark
I would question thee,
Alone in the shadow drear and stark,
With God and me!

A SUGGESTED SCHEME FOR SELF-MEASUREMENT IN ENGLISH TEACHING

GENERAL POINTS IN PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

1. Am I careful of my personal appearance?
2. Do I place the right valuation on good health?
3. Have I initiative and resourcefulness?
4. Do I easily adjust myself to a changed environment?
5. Am I practical enough to give due attention to light, heat, and ventilation in my classroom?
6. Do I conscientiously meet the demands for promptness, regularity, self-control, integrity, industry, loyalty, and sincerity?
7. Do I easily secure within the schoolroom a sense of firm and kindly discipline?
8. Am I as frank and just and courteous in my dealings with my pupils as I expect them to be with me?
9. Do I cultivate a breadth and versatility of interests that make it easy for me to enter sympathetically into an understanding fellowship with those whose life and training are radically different from my own?
10. Do I properly cultivate my sense of humor and freely share it with my pupils?
11. Am I continually looking forward to the great aim of making each one of my pupils develop into a citizen worthy of America and worthy of the world?

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT FOR ENGLISH TEACHING

1. Am I continually adding to my store of literary knowledge?
2. In my choice of reading do I tend too much or too little toward the current writers? Could I more profitably spend my time in the systematic study of the Bible or the classics?
3. Am I growing more proficient in my own power to write? Would any magazine accept my literary contributions?
4. Am I growing more skilful in my use of oral English? What special defects should I strive to overcome?
5. Have I acquired a reasonable mastery of my speaking voice? Is it rightly pitched for classroom work? Is it well modulated? Are my tones deep and full? Do I enunciate clearly? Am I sure of pronunciations?

6. Have I completely eliminated all errors of grammar, all provincialisms, all troublesome misspellings? Am I accurate without being pedantic?

7. Have I a sufficient knowledge of library methods to direct my pupils to an economical gathering of material for a special project?

8. Am I anxious to learn about new mechanical devices that may be of possible use in the English classroom, such devices as the filing cabinet, or the dictaphone?

9. Am I sufficiently well informed on current events of national and international significance so that I can be a really helpful guide in educating boys and girls to meet the demands for the new and larger citizenship?

RECITATION PROCEDURE

1. In the recitation hour do I at once secure and steadily maintain the attention and interest of my pupils? If I see the interest flagging, am I resourceful in quickly re-arousing it?

2. Do I have each recitation carefully previsioned? Is it so rigidly planned that I fail to take advantage of unexpected opportunities?

3. Do I create a good *esprit de corps*?

4. Do I take adequate time for the next assignment?

5. Are the pupils constantly stimulated to do their best? And in this stimulation is the problem of discipline largely solved?

6. Am I skilful in creating the right atmosphere for a socialized recitation?

7. In my literature work do I maintain an appropriate balance between intensive and extensive reading?

8. Do I succeed in having all the written work handed in promptly? Am I careful to criticize it sympathetically and constructively?

9. Am I sufficiently patient with the slow and sufficiently inspiring with the bright?

10. Do I early in the term master the name of each pupil, and thus tend to secure his confidence in my personal interest? And do I habitually use the names in my recitations?

11. Do I know after one month's time the individualities of my pupils, particularly their points of special interest, their points of special strength, and their special weaknesses?

12. Do I call upon certain pupils too frequently?

13. Am I successful in supervising their study inside and outside the classroom? Are they gaining power to work alone?

14. Do my questions stimulate the highest type of interested thinking? Are they broadly conceived and skilfully phrased, or are they mere trivial test questions?

15. Do I analyze the material of English so that I know what subjects should be taught by lecture? By topical method? By questions?

16. Do I make sufficient use of the concrete, or am I too prone to use the abstract? Do I make frequent and efficient use of the blackboard?

17. In what direction and by what means are the moral and ethical opportunities of English work handled?

18. Am I taking pains to present economically the things I teach? Can I, for instance, teach so efficiently that my pupils will in one lesson master the distinction between the restrictive and the non-restrictive clause?

19. Am I measuring progress from day to day? Are my recitations brought to an effective close, or do they end with a sense of fragmentariness?

20. Would I welcome a stenographic report of a chance-chosen recitation? If reduced to typewritten form would such a report be a finished piece of pedagogical art?

21. Does my teaching of literature create a genuine desire to read good books, and does my teaching of composition generate a real pride in craftsmanship?

INTRA-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP

1. Have I been successful in getting from the other teachers in my school the sort of co-operation that will secure good oral and written work in all non-English recitations? Am I equally free in offering my services in furthering the interests of their departments? Do I create among my pupils a general desire for willing co-operation?

2. Am I sufficiently alert in suggesting to my principal or head of department improvements in the course of study, assembly programs, or other matters that might be of real benefit to the school?

3. When given a committee assignment do I give really thoughtful and constructive aid? Or am I willing that my work be perfunctorily done?

4. Do I accept gracefully my share of those special assignments that are necessarily frequent in any school system?

5. Do I take a cordial interest in the extra-curriculum activities? Debating? Dramatics? Special programs? School paper? Social gatherings? Athletics? Clubs? Music? Red Cross?

6. Do I create among the pupils the sort of attitude that easily invites confidences and cordially welcomes requests for personal advice, particularly in the line of vocational and educational guidance?

7. Am I alert in my desire to suggest interesting and helpful reading-matter to my pupils and to my fellow-teachers?

8. Am I cordial in receiving the visits of my fellow-teachers, and if so, am I correspondingly cordial when I return my pedagogical calls?

9. Do I allow interests outside my school to interfere with my efficiency as a teacher?

EXTRA-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP

1. Am I sufficiently ambitious to extend my influence toward furthering the general advancement of English teaching?

2. If I discover an effective teaching device, am I sufficiently altruistic to give it publicity, either in educational gatherings or in educational periodicals?

3. Do I make a proper effort to bring to the attention of my community a knowledge of coming lectures or plays or moving pictures which will tend to create a finer spirit of culture and conduct ?
4. Do I find it possible to enter heartily into work that directly aids the development of a higher type of community spirit ?
5. Am I successful in enlisting such co-operation with parents, pastors, or special friends as will develop the best effort of each pupil ?

Now I am not presenting the foregoing with any feeling that the scheme is adequate or final. It has not yet been tested. Its obvious defects are many. Perhaps the most obvious is the absolute impossibility of any one teacher's answering the questions correctly, even though he answer each with absolute honesty. But those particular teachers who have been on the committee emphatically assure me that while this list was being formulated they consciously, under the direct impetus of the personal inquiry, greatly improved their individual teaching processes. And that, I submit, is the most valuable testimony that can be offered.

The frank answering of these questions should tend to make each teacher conscious of his more apparent deficiencies and immediately determined to gain from summer schools, from regular graduate study, from travel, from books and magazines, from friendly council with his associates, indeed from every available source, the kind of help that will directly aid him in his laudable desire for the highest possible self-improvement in the field of English teaching.